

MAYOR'S COMMITTEE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

April 23, 2008

MINUTES – Meeting in Newton City Hall – Cafeteria

PRESENT: Doug Sweet (Co-Chair), Jane Brown, Rob Caruso, Lucie Chansky, Jini Fairley, Rosemary Larking, Barbara Lischinsky, Girard Plante
REGRETS: Jeff Hutter, Heather Platt, Jason Rosenberg, Janna Zwerner
STAFF: Beverly Droz, Amy Yuhasz
GUESTS: Geneva Boyer

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Members honored Herb Cole and Linda Hiller for their work over the past 10 years on behalf of MCPD. Each was presented with a Certificate of Appreciation from the Mayor.

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm. This meeting was chaired by Doug.

Introductions were made and we welcomed Geneva Sieber Boyer, a high school student interested in the work of the MCPD.

A motion for the minutes of the 3/17/08 meeting was made and accepted.

Rosemary made the motion, and Rob seconded, to accept with sadness and much appreciation the resignations of Herb Cole and Linda Hiller. **This motion was approved.**

CDBG ACCESS PROJECTS REPORT for April by Amy

This report was submitted to MCPD by email before this meeting for their review. Per usual it is copied here within the minutes. Comments are noted at the end of this report.

- Accessible Pedestrian Signals (Project CD0703C. Expended, \$25,015; Budget balance: \$19,813) – Work will proceed in July. The Committee has requested the installation of APS-10 audible pedestrian signals at the intersections of Walnut and Cabot, Beacon and Chestnut, and Adams and Watertown. The total estimated hardware costs for these three intersections is \$4,200—based on a cost of \$350 per pedestrian button. We have requested that the Department of Public Works pay the approximately \$1,200 for installation; however, they do not have the funds needed at this time. Centre St. and Centre Ave. is a fourth priority intersection. Our hope is to initiate separate and independent crossing signals for the two streets, straighten the crosswalk across Centre St., and place the vehicle stop line before the crosswalk. The intersection would be best served by Polara Navigator signals because of ambient sound control and beaconing capabilities. Washington St. and Commonwealth Ave. is a fifth priority intersection. National Development and Newton-Wellesley Hospital have agreed to contribute \$90,000 toward improvements at that intersection. The Board of Aldermen voted to seek design recommendations from a consultant. Because the Purchasing Department is requiring that the consultant contract be bid, nothing will be determined until early in 2008. We are hoping that the project will include accessible pedestrian signals, preferably Polara Navigator signals.
- Wellington Park Access (Project CD0303C. Expended, \$5,411; Budget balance, \$0) –

Anticipate bench installation in May. This project is a joint project using CDBG funds and Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds. The CDBG portion of the project is complete, except for the installation of benches. *[See the following project.]* It consists of an asphalt walkway providing an accessible route from the park entrance on Kilburn Street, past the basketball and tennis courts, then to the park entrance on Princess Road. *The CPA portion of the work was delayed because of a disagreement among residents regarding the location and surface material of additional walkways in the park. We have been told that the matter has been settled and all walkways will be constructed with asphalt surfaces to enhance accessibility.* (Expected Date of Completion: Spring 2008)

- Benches (Project CD0403C. Expended, \$0; Budget balance, \$3,000)
– No change since last report; anticipate bench installation in May. The current budget will be limited to installation of benches at Wellington Park when the construction of walkways in the park is completed. (Expected Date of Completion: Spring 2008)
- Curb Cuts (Project CD0803G. Expended, \$47,941; Budget Balance: \$134,887) – Work on curb cuts has begun. During the late summer and fall they completed 38 of the 62 curb cuts we had requested for installation. We’ve also recommended the removal of 10 poorly located and non-conforming curb cuts. Ironically, it was one week after construction ended when we finally received state approval to construct needed curb cuts at the intersection of Boylston St. and Hammond Pond Parkway. The approval process took a mere eight months. We are still expanding our list of curb cuts to be done in the 2008 construction season. Mayor’s Committee members are encouraged to report priority locations for needed curb cuts. (Expected Date of Completion: None. On-going work.)
- Public Facilities and Parks Access (Project CD0703A. Expended, \$27,975; Budget balance, \$40,075, of which \$28,882 has yet to be committed.)
– No change since last report. The first project that was completed under this budget was the construction of two sets of stairs and railings in Burr Park. The second project under this budget is the construction of the accessible walkway from the Mason-Rice School parking lot to the planned accessible play area within the Newton Centre Playground. The project is being managed by the Dept. of Parks and Recreation and carried out by the Dept. of Public Works. *Work has been completed on the section of the walkway from the school parking lot to the brook.* The remaining portion of the walkway beyond the brook will be completed in 2008 following the installation of the new play area. There will be approximately \$28,882 remaining in this budget following the completion of the Newton Centre Playground walkway. *We can assign these remaining funds to a public facilities or parks project at any time.* There is a potential long-term request from the Dept. of Parks and Recreation for accessibility improvements at the Newton Highlands Playground and Upper Falls Playground. (EDC: none)
- FY08 Uncommitted Funds (Project CD0803A. Budget balance, \$61,470) – *This represents funds available for project(s) to be determined.* Because of the on-going need for accessible curb cuts, this budget is a logical source for applying to future curb cut construction, but other projects can be considered.
- FY09 Funds (Project CD0903A. \$123,485) – *This represents funds available for project(s) to be determined.*

The following represents discussion on the above CDBG report:

Amy spoke with Clint S. about the work MCPD approved at the last meeting: Walnut and Cabot, Beacon and Chestnut, Adams and Watertown. Due to the DPW budget that work will begin after July 1.

Rosemary reported on Washington and Chestnut Streets. Bev has submitted it to the DPW.

Doug reported that all the signals along Walnut, Washington, Watertown and Chestnut Streets are messed up and don't work appropriately. He also reported on the one on Grove Street which doesn't give any beaconing sound.

Rosemary said the push button in front of Warren House is still inaccessible. Barbara said the one signal in front of the Avalon works well. Amy will check on Washington and Commonwealth Avenue signals.

All newly installed pedestrian signals should be APS.

It was decided to invite Alderman Vicki Danberg to the MCPD meeting on May 19.

Doug would like to know how we could get a MCPD representative on the Traffic Council. Bev noted that they have five members representing certain departments and 1 citizen.

CURB CUTS: Work has begun, including new curb cuts on Homer Street between city hall and the library.

Doug mentioned a site east of Beacon Street near Washington Street where there is a "permanent cone". Amy's made note of various locations and will check them out.

Amy said that we have \$200,000 that can be committed to new or existing projects. She and Lowell will do site visits with Clint during the month so she can report to us ahead of our May meeting. We will discuss and make decisions then.

OTHER BUSINESS

Education Center

Lucie reported that the automatic door opener at the Education Center is not working again. Sometimes it works, other times it doesn't. This is an ongoing problem.

Letters to Businesses, etc.:

Doug mentioned that he does intend to make the letter templates so we have a basic format to start with and we can then tailor letters depending on to whom we are sending them.

Representative to Elderly Disabled Taxation Aid Committee:

Linda Hiller, who served on that committee but has now resigned, explained briefly that they give money to people who meet the criteria set forth by the Assessing Department. Rosemary has expressed interest in being on that committee and Bev will again let the Department Head know.

Representative to Fair Housing Task Force:

Bev reminded the Committee that Janna can't continue. Barbara can not resume her previous involvement with them. Bev attends their meetings and will act as MCPD rep until another member can do so.

Point Person for HP spaces, etc.:

We need a point person for HP spaces and some of the tasks Herb did. Rob does this also, for example – his work with Walgreen's store in Newton Centre. Lucie said she will try to help out as well.

521- CMR:

Members wondered if Jason had forwarded the information to Tom Hopkins at the AAB.

Ordinance:

Bev noted that she, Lowell, and Amy have received and reviewed Clint Schuckel's draft redline ordinance regarding the petition process for handicapped parking spaces. We have let Clint know we are in agreement with them since the amendments serve to clarify the administration of the process. It will be presented to the Public Safety & Transportation Committee of the Board of Aldermen tonight. They hope for passage of this legislation next month.

Bev explained that the basic goals of the ordinance are to:

1. Expand the list of potential petitioners to include a handicapped person's designee, members of Traffic Council, members of the Board of Aldermen, and the DPW Commissioner. Right now, only a handicapped person can technically petition for a space.
2. Enable the expiration of spaces in residential areas when they no longer appear to be used due to change in health condition, user moved, etc. Spaces in front of non- residential uses (e.g., village squares) would not be subject to review every 2 years. They would essentially be there in perpetuity unless a change of conditions prompted a petition to move or remove an HP space.

In summary, the new Ordinance aims to facilitate a responsive process via the Traffic Council, with input from the MCPD, for evaluating requests to add, move, or remove HP spaces in an objective and consistent manner.

Newton Highlands Depot Station

Bev reported that renovation is happening at the historic building at 18 Station Ave., which has never been accessible. It is being turned into 2 offices. Architect Donald Lang called Bev to describe it, including how they are making the side door accessible, and it will have accessible bathrooms, parking, slope, door opener, etc. They have a special permit from the City and are applying for a variance from AAB regarding the front entrance since there is not enough footage to make that entrance accessible and it would also change the whole front of the historic building. Members requested that Bev invite Donald Lang to the next meeting.

Water / Sewer Issues:

Barbara would like to present this before the Committee on the May agenda. She'll present as a citizen.

Arborpoint:

We need to do a follow-up letter to Arborpoint to see what they've done since Girard, Doug, Lucie, Barbara and Lowell's last site visit. There are still no HP parking spaces for visitors. Girard would consider a June site visit. There's also concern that Arborpoint is segregating the disabled to one area.

Schools:

Geneva asked if there are flashing lights in the schools in places like the bathrooms so the deaf can hear the fire alarm. Bev will email Mike Cronin to inquire.

Handicap Parking:

Bev reported that she received a request for HP parking at the Office of Dr, Michael Sheff, a pediatric dental office located at 221 Washington St., Newton Corner, where he treats developmentally disabled and physically challenged patients. MCPD asked Bev to invite him to the May meeting.

Newton Corner Library:

Bev reported that she had received papers from the AAB regarding a complaint against the library regarding the automatic door openers by Maryan Amaral, as well as the City Solicitor's letter of response back to the AAB.

Newton North High School:

Bev reminded the Committee that at our March 17 meeting when Buildings Commissioner Nick Parnell presented, we made a motion in favor of a waiver to forgo the V ramp options. He requested a letter of support, detailing this motion, and on 3-31-08 Bev wrote that letter and sent it to him.

There was a motion to adjourn at 8:35pm.

The next meeting will be Wednesday, May 19th at 6:30pm in the cafeteria.